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Program teaches mentoring relationships

by 2nd Lt. J. Elaine Hunnicutt, AFRL Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Approximately 20 people stepped forward August 29 to learn how to mentor.

Tim Holman, contracted through Clark State Community College in Springfield came to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and taught a four-hour course on how to be a better mentor and protégé at the Air Force Research Laboratory. He provided tips for current and potential mentoring relationships for both military and civilian AFRL members.

Mentoring is a hot topic for senior leadership when it comes to AFRL, due to the high volume of educated minds that will become retirement eligible within the next few years.

“It is imperative that we capture this experience and knowledge, using it to train the future scientists and engineers that will replace them,” said Maj. Bob Bolha, AFRL mentoring coordinator.

Although participants had various professional and personal reasons for attending, all came to improve their skills.

The Air Force has emphasized mentoring for years, and most people practice some form of mentoring in their everyday life. AFRL has expanded their Mentoring Program from the military members at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to all of the military at their nationwide detachments, and now the focus is also on incorporating well-designed voluntary mentoring into the civilian side of the house.

Some important points made during the training include the following:

- Everyone should understand the mission and how they impact that mission
- A mentoring program can have a positive effect on morale and productivity
- Effective communication is important in any relationship

“The tools taught in this class can be applied to all aspects of our lives. We each mentor every day, everywhere. Being a more effective (communicator and mentor) would improve the work (place) as well as our homes and community,” said Bolha.

According to an editorial published in Air Force Print News in March, Chief Master Sgt. Bill McNew, 10th Air Base Wing superintendent, Colorado Springs, Colo., said, “I have always felt that mentorship is not a program ... it is a responsibility. The very essence of mentoring is to make a positive difference in the lives of others.”

According to Bolha, in a mentoring relationship, you can impact someone else’s life and career by just being available, and showing genuine concern for the mentoree.

For more information about mentoring, call Maj. Bolha at DSN 785-0640 or commercial at (937) 255-0640. Air Force Instruction 36-3401 also provides guidance on the mentoring program. @